

4 October 2002

Committee Secretary  
House of Representative  
Standing Committee on Education and Training  
R1 106, Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools**

Attached is a brief written submission from Light Manufacturing Training Australia (LMTA) as the peak body for education and training in the Light Manufacturing industries based on consultation with clients and stakeholders.

The Board has continually emphasised the importance of VET in Schools as central to the growth and success of light manufacturing enterprises. A measure of this emphasis is LMTA's involvement in the Workskill competitions being held in 2002 in Newcastle. The Board has arranged to hold its October meeting at the competition venue and has authorised a project officer to be in attendance throughout the three days event.

We would be pleased to attend the Inquiry in person if the opportunity arises.

Yours sincerely

**Sue Woodward**  
**General Manager**  
**Light Manufacturing Training Australia**

Attach.

# **Light Manufacturing Training Australia**

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## **Submission to**

### **The House of Representatives Education and Training Committee**

## **Inquiry into**

### **Vocational Education and Training in Schools**

**October 2002**

Authorised by Light Manufacturing Training Australia

4 October 2002

Submitted by Sue Woodward

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# Light Manufacturing Training Australia

## SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

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### 1. Background

Light Manufacturing Training Australia is the National Industry Training Advisory Board responsible for the Light Manufacturing industries of Furnishing and Textiles Clothing and Footwear (TCF).

These two broad industries cover a range of industries which are interrelated and independent of each other. The full list of the various sub-sectors is set out in **(Attachment A)**.

Light Manufacturing Training Australia has over the past five years developed two Training Packages:

- Textiles Clothing and Footwear
- Furnishing

Light Manufacturing Training Australia has also produced through industry and other stakeholders a range of resources to support the implementation of these Packages.

In terms of VET in Schools, these two Training Packages represent two significant studies in the schools sector:

- Woodwork
- Textiles (sewing)

These studies are usually initiated at levels 7-10 and are then translated into other programs at years 11 and 12 such as Technology Studies. They also lead onto New Apprenticeship training in such areas as cabinet making, wood machining, industrial sewing, textile mechanics etc in TAFE institutions and in employment.

The importance of the industry skills embodied in the two Training Packages cannot be underestimated. These skills have been identified by industry and form the basis of a great range of learning and training in schools, in TAFEs and in employment.

### 2. Light Manufacturing and VET in Schools

The various industries which come under the banner of Light Manufacturing recognise the importance of VET in Schools particularly in relation to providing pathways for young people into the various industry sectors.

The industry has placed great importance on promoting the skills of the industries and the employment opportunities that these skills provide for young people.

Light Manufacturing Training Australia has surveyed its clients and stakeholders and has produced a summary issues paper for the Inquiry. This paper indicates that there are some deep seated barriers within the secondary systems (and also in TAFE) to the development of VET in Schools as envisaged by industry, (**Attachment B**).

Light Manufacturing Training Australia is currently engaged on a State/Territory basis to assist State Training Authorities and relevant Providers to develop courses which are based on the industry skills within the Training Packages. At the same time, Light Manufacturing Training Australia is consulting with clients and stakeholders to continuously improve units of competency and the qualification frameworks of the Training Packages to ensure the development of relevant courses for VET in Schools.

### **3. Future Growth of VET in Schools**

An important part of the growth of VET in Schools is to ensure that the competency based education and training system built into the national Training Packages meets both the needs of young people in education and the business needs of companies.

There has been a negative reaction in the community to the emphasis on entrance scores to universities as the basis for education and training. There is also a trend for some young people who are academically very capable to do VET courses because they provide a direct pathway to what they will be doing when they leave school.

At the same time, families of young people at the secondary level of education and training are asking for more practical based studies for their children especially to make the studies more interesting and relevant.

The various sectors of the light manufacturing industry have indicated that they want the secondary based curriculum (especially at years 11 and 12) to include more rigorous practical based learning as the basis for, pathways to further education and to training in the workplace.

There is also a conviction from a strong group of education professionals that practical based learning has a central place in all learning. This means that so called academic (theory) based studies should be integrated with practical learning as a matter of course.

The growth of VET in Schools will depend on how the courses developed at upper secondary levels can successfully integrate the practical and theory requirements of any particular field of study. One problem with very regionally based and are dictated by what employment is currently available. This can be

very short sighted. and perhaps acts against geographically dispersed industries such as those covered by LMTA.

The curriculum studies associated with light manufacturing are based on highly practical skills that are still in high demand in both the Australian and international employment market and as such should be encouraged and nurtured within the VET in Schools context.

#### **4. General Comments**

In Australia there appears to be less value placed on vocational education and training than in other countries such as Germany and Japan.

VET in Schools has in the past been variously considered as second class education and training most suited to young people who are “only good with their hands” or as the basis for remedial education and training. In Germany the opposite is true – practical based education and training is considered the most important type of learning.

The most difficult problem for the growth and effectiveness of VET in Schools is the attitude towards qualified industry people by the professional education industry. Qualified industry people are forced by the system to engage in formal degree level academic studies to gain registration as teachers in secondary education. The failure of the system to recognise the qualifications of industry people as suitable for registration as teachers at the secondary level will continue to be the greatest barrier to VET in Schools growth and effectiveness.

**Attachment A**

**Light Manufacturing Training Australia  
List of Light Manufacturing Industries**

**Light Manufacturing Training Australia**

**LIST OF LIGHT MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES**

The Light Manufacturing industries have a wide coverage comprising several broad industry groups, some of which include a number of sub-sectors. Below is a list of the thirty main industry sectors belonging to the Furnishing, Textiles, Clothing and Footwear industries.

1. Blinds and Awnings
2. Clothing Production
3. Coopering
4. Cotton Ginning
5. Dry Cleaning Operations
6. Early Stage Wool Processing
7. Fine Wood
8. Floor Covering and Finishing
9. Footwear Production
10. Footwear Repair
11. Furniture Finishing
12. Furniture Making (Domestic and Commercial)
13. Glass and Glazing
14. Headwear
15. Hide, Skin and Leather
16. Interior Decoration
17. Laundry Operations
18. Leather Goods Production
19. Mattress and Base Making
20. Medical Grade Footwear
21. Millinery
22. Musical Instrument Making and Repair
23. Piano Tuning and Repair
24. Picture Framing
25. Security Grills and Screens
26. Soft Furnishing
27. Stained Glass and Lead Lighting
28. Textile Fabrication
29. Textile Production
30. Upholstery

**Attachment B**

Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into VET in Schools



## Light Manufacturing Training Australia

### Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into VET in Schools Summary of Issues

Issues	Sub-issues	Implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The place of “VET in Schools” with academic studies in years 11 and 12</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Second class studies (eg. VCAL in Victoria)</li> <li>● Cost per hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Remedial programs only</li> <li>● Up to 20 times costlier than academic studies such as Maths and English</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The future growth of “VET in Schools” as part of the secondary curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cost of facilities including equipment (eg. woodwork studies)</li> <li>● Time allocation – competition between studies/subjects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Perception that VET in Schools is far too costly to set up and out of date too soon</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The development of “VET in Schools” into new and emerging practical areas of learning and training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Specialist Schools (eg Food Technology centres)</li> <li>● Qualifications of practical (non academic) teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Valuable academic studies would have to be dropped – teachers would become redundant</li> <li>● Victoria got rid of these Specialist Schools 20 years ago because they had direct job outcomes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The effectiveness of VET in Schools as a pathway to higher education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Registration of practical (non academic) teachers</li> <li>● University entrance through a TER (Tertiary entrance results)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Suitable teachers don’t have the right academic studies</li> <li>● Union requirement to have a degree as a minimum qualification</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The effectiveness of VET in Schools to gain direct employment in industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Penalties for university entrance for practical (non academic) studies at years 11 and 12</li> <li>● Assessment for competence in VET in Schools (off job training)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Most universities won’t accept results of the practical non-academic studies</li> <li>● Families won’t encourage children to take up the non-academic studies</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The effectiveness of VET in Schools to help indigenous access and success in education and training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assessment for competence in VET in TAFE (off job training)</li> <li>● Assessment for competence in VET in the workplace (on job training)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Simulated School based assessment is unsuitable for the assessment of competence</li> <li>● TAFEs don’t have the same union restrictions as VET in Schools</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Comparison between TAFE practical (non academic) studies and VET in Schools</li> <li>● New practical (non academic) areas of study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Some practical studies can only be assessed through work based training</li> <li>● TAFE has more money, better equipment and better trained teachers</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● remote based practical (non academic) studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Training Packages have set up many more practical (non academic) studies</li> <li>● Can practical (non academic) studies be done by distance learning?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● access and equity for disadvantaged industries and groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Some industries won’t accept VET in Schools assessment of competence</li> <li>● wood/work/textiles are important studies for access/ equity groups and individuals</li> </ul>

## **Attachment C**

### **Thoughts on Vocational Education in Schools**

## **THOUGHTS ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS**

**By: Michael Reid: Former Principal – Sandringham Secondary College**

### **1. CURRICULUM ISSUES**

Since retention rates increased there is a gap in the curriculum which has not been adequately filled, to my knowledge – I suppose it's too soon to pass judgement on VCAL.

How do I know that the gap is still there? Well, teachers tell me so. According to Art and Technology staff at Sandringham Secondary College (SS College), the VCE became more, not less, academic following the last review. Thus the VER review and the Kirby report went in different directions!

The teachers also observe their students, their apathy, defensiveness, tardiness etc. and conclude rightly that there are more currents at work here than the feckleness of modern youth. I think Year 11 and 12 teachers recognise this more readily than their colleagues in the middle-school.

There is also the evidence of quite high non-competition and drop-out rates in some secondary schools, while the MYRAD (middle-school) project indicates disturbingly high levels of non-engagement and absenteeism statewide in the years leading up to the post-compulsory phase.

A few schools have responded to the latter problem by developing vocational programs in Years 9-10. There are various permutations, but in all cases necessity has been the mother of invention. The common elements in such programs are some 'core' studies, personal development, a TAFE component eg, TAFE Tasters – maybe some community-based activity, may a VCE study, usually Industry and Enterprise, maybe some Jobs Pathways stuff or Work Education in some other form.

### **2. STUDENTS**

Who are the students currently languishing in the 'gap'? Well Richard Tease (Current Principal of Sandringham Secondary College) could provide a better answer than me.

But I would make one observation based on my time as Sandringham Secondary College: some students attracted to VET courses are academically very capable. I refer to students who say that....

- they like being able to put their understandings into practice;
- they like to have a sense that what they spend their time on at school is on a continuum with what they'll be doing when they leave school;
- they feel they are gaining a competitive edge over other school leavers by doing VET.

This last point is kind of interesting, is it not?

Anyway I suspect there are many more such students in our schools than is commonly recognised; the kids themselves may not even be aware it. And if this is true, then it is a function of the whole edifice we have built that centers on the ENTER etc.

Incidentally I sometimes think these kids are intelligent, literate artisans. I must trace the derivation of “artisan” one day. And whilst I’m on this track, why is it that we only recognise the dignity of having practical skills when we are in need of them ourselves?

### **3. INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVES**

Well you would know better than me, however my experience at Sandringham Secondary College suggests to me that:

- certain industries are screaming for people;
- employers who provide on-the-job training and do it well – ie. there was strong support from the school – some to feel very positive about the experience (this is the issue of ‘teacher’ having to think reflectively about their own performance and understanding and the benefits this brings).

### **4. VARIOUS PERCEPTIONS**

This is a very complex issue. One of the best teachers at Sandringham Secondary College once said to me, “There is no such thing as vocational education”. He meant that it’s a contradiction in terms. This is what we’re up against.

As I write this I find myself thinking of the Blackburn Report, as far as I am aware the bravest and most intelligent attempt to grapple with the issues which are lurking about here, parity of esteem, theory and practice, the models we provide, the semiotics of the system, if you like.

Even your humble author is aware of a wee pocket of prejudice deep in his noble soul against the notion of competency-based learning.

Then there’s the parents.

And the kids.

Mind you, many parents are starting to catch on.

I suspect teachers still like to mystify their knowledge.

I suspect many things.

## 5. RESOURCING

As always, a huge issue. VET programs – vocational programs – are very expensive, whichever way you look at it. There's equipment, materials, teacher expertise, workplace visitation and assessment, careers counselling, work placement co-ordination, VET co-ordination, purchase of off-the-job training, handbooks, brochures, PD, etc.

DE+AT is currently providing some funding so schools can purchase off-the-job training, but I understand that schools are eventually expected to keep the show going out of their own SGB.

I don't think this will happen. Vocational Education will become like – already is like – District Provision, an access issue.

I've lost touch with the role of the AST in funding school clusters for work place co-ordinators etc.

## 6. THE ROLE OF ITABS

Don't know anything about them – which perhaps carries its own message.

I guess what is obvious is the message from the Kirby report: the 'system' has to fit the kids, not the other way around. There is too much at stake otherwise – nothing less than the chance to have a life in some cases. That is to say, there are kids even in Years 9-10 for whom the availability of **Something Different** means the difference between staying at school or dropping out – that is, **Dropping Out!** This something different will almost certainly entail a vocational element, at the very least an element(s) which provides connection, which affirms and empowers, instead of denies the very identity of young people.

If ITABs can become partners with schools and other agencies in provision of well researched and designed vocational programs, well ....need I say more.